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How would you like to be able to leave today saying, “I now have great courage to face all kinds of evil.” That’s my goal today in this message. Our God shows us how to face evil with courage.

What is evil? When we say courage to face evil, we need to define evil because we use that term in a variety of contexts. When I say “evil” what pops into your mind?

- For some of you it’s a vision of the Exorcist. You think of horror movies featuring Satan, and that’s evil. True, but that’s not what we’re going to talk about today.
- Others of you when you hear “evil” you think of your ex-husband or ex-wife or someone else that hurt you deeply. Okay, that may or may not be evil... come and talk to me in my office and we’ll figure that out. .
- We speak of evil in a general sense as anything that doesn’t go our way... anything unpleasant that I must deal with. A tornado destroying our house is an evil. Losing our job is evil. I can’t argue with the English use of the term... it is what is. And we have talked about how to face that in past sermons and we will again in the future, but I want to talk with you about something different today.

Today we want to narrow the scope. For our purposes today, then, we’re going to define evil like this: Anyone we must face whose views or words or life oppose God and his will. Listen: God’s way is the right way. God’s will is holy and good. But in this world we must face people who oppose God’s will and God’s way. They do not listen to God. They do not trust in God. They do not submit to God or obey him. By their words, their ways and their life, they are opposing almighty God. I would suggest to you that this would be the most accurate definition of evil. Whenever someone speaks or lives or does contrary to the will of God, there you have evil. Is **Satan** evil? Does he oppose God’s will and his ways? Yes. Is our **old sinful nature** in us evil? Does it sometimes oppose God’s will and God’s ways? Yes. Is the **unbelieving world** evil? Does it oppose God’s will and God’s ways? Yes. And it’s primarily that last category we’re going to talk about today. How do we get courage to face and deal with the unbelievers of the world who couldn’t care less about God’s will and God’s ways? In fact, they openly fight against the will of God.

So on a daily basis, most of you face evil.

- Evil is when the college professor mocks the Christians in his classroom, whether openly or subtly.
- Evil is when a “friend” drank too much and is egging you on to do the same.
- Evil is when a group of people you’re with start gossiping about someone, ruining their good name.
- Evil is when the co-worker suggests lying to the customer in order to cover a mistake.
- Evil is when your classmate tells you he’s got the answers to the test and offers them to you.

In each of these situations, God’s will is being openly opposed. What will you do about it? How can you have courage in the face of evil?

To find the answer we turn to an Old Testament story. In this story, Moses and his brother Aaron, two believers, must go face to face with evil. We will see how they got courage to face evil, and through this, God will teach us too.

Background: What evil do we meet in our story? We pick things up with God's chosen people, the children of Israel enslaved in Egypt. They had come to Egypt 400 years earlier as a small clan during a time of famine. With Joseph as second in command of Egypt, the Pharaoh gave Joseph's family a choice section of the country to settle in. But as the centuries passed and as the children of Israel grew from a small clan into a small nation numbering perhaps 2,000,000 people, the Egyptians grew increasingly concerned. Pharaoh enslaved the people, but they continued to multiply. They also were increasingly oppressed and abused by the Egyptians. God finally had enough and decided it was time to lead his people out of Egypt into the land he had first promised to Abraham some 600 years earlier.

To lead his people out of Egypt God called Moses. And because Moses had problem speaking, his brother Aaron did the talking. God told them to go and confront Pharaoh. Pharaoh was evil. Pharaoh would not listen to God, would not trust in God, and would not obey God. Pharaoh did what he wanted. He was completely unconcerned what God wanted. So God told them to go to him and ask him to let the people leave peaceably to go in to the wilderness to worship God. But God already knew how this would turn out. He told Moses and Aaron up front that Pharaoh would not listen, that there would be plagues inflicted on Egypt and then eventually God would bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

Now, can you imagine the fear that must have been in Moses and Aaron? They had to go face evil, and evil was holding an awful lot of power. He had an enormous, highly trained army to back him up. And here's where we pick things up:

Exodus 7:8-13 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake."

God told Moses and Aaron that Pharaoh would not listen to them. He would ask for proof that they spoke on God's authority. He would want to see a miracle. So God told them what kind of miracle they were to perform. Throw down a simple wooden walking staff before Pharaoh, and it would turn into a snake.

Before we read on, I don't want you to miss this important point. If you're going to face evil and be able to do so with courage, what is the first thing you need to do? You need to do what Moses and Aaron did. Get staff. No, that's not it. You need to listen. Listen to the Word of the Lord. Notice that these two brothers didn't sit down and hatch a plan of their own. They simply listened to what God said. This is in stark contrast to Pharaoh, who, as we shall see, refused to listen to what God says.

So you are in a situation where you are facing someone who refuses to yield to God or his will. What do you do? You listen to God. Where is God speaking? In his Holy Word the Bible. Listen to God so you know his promises. Listen to God so you know what to do. Listen to God so you know his will. Listening is the first step to facing evil with courage. Jesus disciples knew this well. In our Gospel lesson when Jesus asked if they were going to abandon him like many others were, they answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life." Exactly! So LISTEN to God.

Second: The second step is actually not specifically mentioned in our text, but we know it's there. The second step after listening is to trust God and his Word. Trust. How do we know Moses and Aaron trusted? Because they did what God commanded. If they didn't trust God, they would have done nothing. Because they trusted they acted.

What did they trust? They trusted 1) that God is in control. If God were not in control, or if they trusted that God was in control, they would have been paralyzed with fear, right? They also trusted 2) in God's love. They trusted that God was on their side and that when God commands something, God will follow through every single time. They trusted his power and they trusted his love.

Certainly it would take a firm trust in God for them to go and confront the leader of the world's greatest super power. But would we say that Moses and Aaron had blind faith in God? Sometimes we Christians are ridiculed because people seem to think that we have blind faith. What is blind faith? It means trusting even though you have no idea of the outcome.

Here's what I mean by blind faith. Anyone see Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. Alright, I know I'm showing my age because half of you are young enough that maybe you didn't see it. Anyway, there's a scene where Indie gets the edge of a deep precipice. He must cross it, but there is no way. The directions tell him he must make a leap of faith. Finally, he takes a deep breath and takes a step forward... only to find a stone bridge under his feet that was perfectly camouflaged with the canyon.

Is that what God calls us to do? To have blind faith? I would suggest to you that this really isn't the case for us. When God makes a promise to us or tells us his will in a matter, trusting him and obeying him is not a matter of blind faith. It surely is faith, but no blind faith. Here's why. God has a history which you are free to examine in depth. He has a long history of promises. So study it. Has God kept his promises or broken them? He has always kept them. So it's not blind faith. We are trusting God's proven promises.

The reason you can face evil with courage, is that God sent his Son to face evil for us. Jesus came to earth to do battle with Satan and accomplish the will of his Father the salvation of all mankind. Jesus accomplished what the Father sent him to do. Through his perfect life and innocent death on the cross... because Jesus faced evil with courage... we are forgiven. Satan is defeated. You are rescued, redeemed and ready for heaven.

So know this: God is speaking: LISTEN. When God has spoken, trust. He is ever faithful and will never let you down.

Now the third thing:

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. [That's the third thing. Obey.] **Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.**

Moses and Aaron obeyed God. They did what God said, and God did exactly what he said he would do. Aaron threw down his staff, and it turned into a snake. Now some wonder about what happens next. The Egyptians magicians also take staffs and turn them into snakes. What's that all about? There are two explanations. Perhaps they were good illusionists and were able to make it look like they turned their staffs into snakes. The second possibility is that Satan did this miracle. This, by the way, is the reason why miracles are not the basis of faith. Miracles are not all from God. Satan can do some miraculous things as well. And going forward, the

magicians are able to partially duplicate other plagues as well. But notice something here. 1) God's miracle is always bigger. In this case, Aaron's snake eats the others snakes. Also notice 2) that the magicians are never able to stop, cancel, or reduce the plagues God sends. They are only able to add to the plagues. They add more snakes, but they can't turn Aaron's snake back into a rod. They are able to turn some water to blood, but they could not turn the bloody Nile back to water. God sent a plague of frogs, and the magicians made a few more, but they could not stop the plague God had sent. God has all power. Satan has some power, but it is limited, and it is powerless against God's power.

Now what is God teaching us? For courage in facing evil, listen to God. Trust in God. Obey God. And every time the person will stop their evil, repent, believe and yield to God. Is that how it works? Aaron does the snake trick and Pharaoh said, "Wow, I was so wrong to refuse your exodus. I'm sorry. Please go. Can we give an escort to show you the best route?" No, that's not what happened. Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

So here's the thing, when you listen to God, you trust in him and his promises and so you obey what he would have you do, you might run into a brick wall. It might appear that there was absolutely no result to facing evil with courage.

- That college professor might persecute you even more when you speak up.
- The drunk friend might mock you more when you refuse to get drunk.
- The gossiping crowd might make you the target of their gossip when you make a courageous stand for God's truth.
- The co-worker who wants to lie to a customer to cover a mistake, and you speak the truth... your working relationship may never be the same.
- When you refuse the test answers from the classmate who offers, they may think you're stupid for not getting the easy 'A.'

But in all these situations, here's what you remember: You listened to God. You trusted God. You obeyed God. And almighty God is smiling upon you because you courageously faced evil. You stood for truth. You stood for what is right. You placed your relationship with God above every human relationship. You gave glory to God in your words and actions.

Friends, how courageous have you been in the face of evil? Have you been courageous? Or were you coward and caved? For those times, approach God with humility, and admit your guilt. And know that through the blood of Jesus, your sin is atoned for and you are forgiven. In the joy and peace of forgiveness, having listened to God, trusted in his mercy, go forward obediently and face evil with courage.

If all of us faced evil with courage, how much better would our families be? Our church? Our companies? Our city? Our nation? This week, listen to God. Trust him. Obey him. Go and face evil with courage. Amen.